DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
June 25, 2007 – PT 2007. 17

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Section 312.10 Purpose

These procedures describe the eligibility criteria, application requirements, selection process, and financial provisions of the Department of Children and Family Services Scholarship Program.

Section 312.20 Definitions

Section 312.30 Description

The DCFS Scholarship Program provides a maximum of 48 scholarships each year, four of which are awarded to children of veterans. Scholarship recipients receive up to four consecutive years of supplemental services and maintenance payments (see Section 312.90) that will include annual tuition and fee waivers if the student attends an Illinois state community college or university. Scholarships do not cover room, board, or dormitory fees. Students may attend other colleges or universities, if scholarships are awarded them, and receive the same maintenance benefits as those students attending state-supported community colleges or universities.

The Office of Education and Transition Services shall prepare and distribute a scholarship program informational transmittal and **Scholarship Program Student Application**, **CFS 438,** no later than January of each year to rules and procedures book holders, Department and purchase of service caseworkers. The transmittal shall provide a description of the scholarship program, benefits, eligibility requirements, required application materials, deadline for submission of applications and other pertinent information.

Section 312.40 Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must meet the following criteria in order to be considered for a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) scholarship.

a) Age and Education

Applicants must be at least 16 years of age and possess a diploma from an accredited high school or a General Education Diploma (GED) by the end of the school year in which he or she applies for a DCFS scholarship.

b) Legal Relationship With DCFS

The Department must have court ordered legal guardianship for the applicant or the Department must have had legal guardianship for the applicant immediately prior to an adoption finalization or placement in a private guardianship arrangement. Youth who were in DCFS guardianship and are re-adopted or placed in a new guardianship arrangement by the DCFS post-adoption unit after the original adoption or guardianship terminates, remain eligible to apply for the scholarship.

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Section 312.50 Application

a) Required Documentation

DCFS scholarship applicants must submit the following documents to the Office of Education and Transition Services, Attn: DCFS Scholarship Program, Department of Children and Family Services, 406 E. Monroe Street, Station #22, Springfield, IL 62701.

- A completed **Scholarship Program Student Application**, **CFS 438,** which includes the applicant's biographical information;
- A transcript of his or her high school grades and class standing, or a copy of his or her GED and score;
- Applicants that are enrolled or previously enrolled in a college or university must submit an official transcript of his or her college grades in place of their high school transcript. The official transcript must be provided by the college or university directly to the OETS;
- The applicant's American College Test (ACT) or Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score; and
- Three letters of recommendation from persons unrelated to the applicant.

b) Application Deadline

Applications must be postmarked no later than March 31st. Applications received with a postmark after that date will be ineligible for consideration.

Section 312.60 Selection

Recipients of Department scholarships shall be selected by the Scholarship Awards Selection Committee (SASC) on the basis of the applicant's scholastic record and aptitude, community and extracurricular activities, and interest in higher education. The SASC will meet in April to review and score the applications. Three members of the committee will score each application and the average of those scores will be assigned to the application. Forty-eight students with the highest scoring applications will be awarded a Department scholarship. Four of the scholarships awarded annually must be made to children of veterans. Applicants will be notified no later than May 20th of their award status.

The Scholarship Awards Selection Committee consists of the following individuals. Persons unable to serve on the committee will appoint a designee to serve in their place.

- Deputy Director, Division of Field Operations
- Deputy Director, Division of Placement/Permanency

- Deputy Director, Division of Service Intervention
- Deputy Director, Division of Child Protection
- Deputy Director, Division of Monitoring/Quality Assurance
- Deputy Director, Division of Communications
- Deputy Director, Division of Guardianship and Advocacy
- Deputy Director, Division of Budget and Finance
- DCFS Legal Services Representative
- Regional Administrators
- Director's Office Representative
- DCFS Legislative Liaison
- Chairperson, Child Welfare Advisory Committee
- Chairperson, Child Care Association of Illinois
- Chairperson, Illinois Foster and Adoptive Parent Association
- Chairperson, Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
- President, Council on Adoptable Children
- Representative of the Walter & Connie Payton Foundation

Section 312.70 Service Planning and Living Arrangements

a) Client Service Plan, CFS 497

If a youth is no longer considered part of his or her family and the Department retains guardianship of the youth, a service plan must be developed for the youth following the instructions for completing the **CFS 497** in **Procedures 305**, **Appendix A**. Caseworkers shall actively involve each youth in the development of his or her service plan and shall review the plan with the youth prior to each administrative case review. The youth's service plan shall include the following.

- A statement of a permanency goal and planned achievement date.

- Specific services to be provided, including the frequency of direct, in person, caseworker contact with the youth. The casework supervisor and caseworker shall establish a schedule of caseworker/youth in person contacts in accordance with **Procedures 315.110(h)**. These meetings shall be used by the caseworker to provide supportive counseling as needed and address unmet needs; to encourage youth to participate in Regional Youth Advisory Boards, which provide youth with an additional venue to express concerns and resolve issues; and to verify the youth's continued school attendance at these meetings. Caseworkers may use telephone and mail contacts in lieu of in person contacts for those students attending school outside the worker's region or out-of-state.

- The requirements that the student provide his or her caseworker with information concerning his or her progress, scholastic standing and, if applicable, earned or unearned income at the end of each quarter or semester.

b) Living Arrangements

When the Department has guardianship of a youth selected to receive a Department scholarship, a living arrangement plan must be established by the youth's caseworker prior to the youth beginning school. The youth may not live in a Department funded placement while receiving monthly grant payments. However, Department funded placements may be available to the youth during extended academic breaks. Youth also have the option of remaining in their current placement and not receive grant payments. Caseworkers must initiate discussions with youth concerning their summer living arrangements by February 1st of each year.

Section 312.80 Ongoing Eligibility Requirements

a) Confirmation of Enrollment

Youth are required to sign an annual consent for release of information between DCFS and the National Student Clearinghouse. The OETS Business Office will confirm the student's enrollment via the Clearinghouse.

b) Grade Point Average

Youth are required to maintain a "C" grade point average. The youth shall submit a copy his or her grade report within one month after the close of each semester or quarter to his or her caseworker and the OETS Business Office to verify his or her academic progress. Youth with whom the Department no longer has a legal relationship must submit their grade report to the OETS Business Office.

c) Credit Hours

Youth are required to maintain an academic load of 12 credit hours during the regular school year and 6 credit hours if they attend a summer session. Youth that participate in a university sanctioned internship program are considered full time students.

Section 312.90 Benefits

a) Tuition and Mandatory Fee Waiver

The OETS Business Office will request a waiver of tuition and mandatory fees for scholarship youth that attend an Illinois state university or community college if the youth does not have a tuition and/or fee scholarship from another source.

b) Monthly Grant Payments

1) Initiating Payment

Youth must provide their caseworkers with written verification of their acceptance/enrollment in a college or university and their school address prior to the beginning of their initial semester or quarter. Caseworkers will verify the information and forward it to the OETS Business Office. Youth that no longer have a legal relationship with the Department must forward the information directly to the OETS Business Office. The OETS Business Office will forward payment information to the Central Office Payment Unit (CPU). Grant payments will be effective the first day the youth is at school and continue throughout the school year. Youth will receive their first payment the following month. The amount will be prorated based on the day of the month the youth was first located at the school.

Caseworkers must provide youth with an explanation of the financial and security benefits of having their grant checks directly deposited and assist the youth with completing the C-95, Authorization for Deposit of Recurring Payments. Youth who do not choose direct deposit will have their grant checks mailed directly to them. Youth are required to report their address change immediately to the OETS Business Office (5415 N. University, Peoria, IL 61615, 309/693-5150, facsimile 309/693-5433) and their caseworker to ensure timely receipt of correspondence and their grant payments.

2) Summer School

The OETS will discontinue grant payments through the summer unless the youth is enrolled in summer school and taking a minimum of six college credit hours, or participating in an approved internship program. Youth that choose to continue their education through the summer months must submit an official class schedule or documentation of participation in an approved internship program to the OETS Business Office and their caseworker no later than first Monday in May so that their grant payments will not be disrupted.

3) Terminating Payment

When a youth no longer meets the requirements to remain in the DCFS Scholarship Program, the youth's caseworker will notify the OETS Business Office immediately. Youth who are no longer the legal responsibility of the Department shall notify the OETS Business Office when they no longer meet the requirements of the program. The OETS Business Office will notify the CPU of the effective payment termination date for the youth.

The OETS Business Office will notify the youth in writing 30 days prior to stopping grant payments for any reason other than summer breaks. If the youth has a legal relationship with the Department and resides in Cook County, the Cook County Public Guardian will also receive a copy of the termination notification. Youth may request a review of the decision to suspend or discharge them from the scholarship program in accordance with **Rules 337**, **Service Appeal Process**. If the youth's grant does not continue during the appeals process, it will be issued retroactively if the youth's appeal is successful.

4) Marriage or Termination of Guardianship

Marriage or termination of guardianship does not terminate a Department scholarship. The Department will continue to make monthly grant payments to the youth, and the youth's medical needs will continue to be met under the Medicaid program.

c) Start-Up Grant

This is a $200.00 one time grant youth will receive upon entrance into the DCFS Scholarship Program. The purpose of the grant is to assist the youth with their initial college living expenses. Youth will receive the Start-Up Grant at the Annual Scholarship Luncheon. Youth not in attendance at the luncheon will have their grant payment mailed to them.

d) Medical and Dental Payments

Medical and dental services are available to DCFS scholarship youth for whom the Department is legally responsible. Medical and dental services are provided through the Department of Healthcare and Family Services Medical Assistance Program via the DCFS issued medical card. The medical card may be used for:

- Preventative health care (i.e., physical, dental, hearing and vision exams and immunizations); and

- Specialty medical care, acute medical care and prescriptions.

Medical case management services are provided to pregnant and parenting youth and their children, zero to five years of age, through the Department of Human services.

Questions concerning the medical card may be directed to the Medical Card Hotline during normal business hours at 800/228-6533.

The youth's caseworker shall assist the youth in identifying Medicaid-enrolled providers for his or her ongoing health care services. The youth's caseworker shall also assist the youth to identify community based health care services. The KidCare Hotline (800/226-0768) and the DCFS Office of Health Services (217/557-2689) can provide assistance in identifying Medicaid enrolled providers.

Note: Caseworkers must complete a **CFS 906** for any change of placement to ensure that Medicaid cards are forwarded to the youth's appropriate address.

e) Mandatory Supplies and Book Payments

The Department may pay for required textbooks and supplies for youth that do not have sufficient resources to purchase the required items. In accordance with an agreement between the OETS Business Office and state university and community college bookstores, scholarship youth attending their institutions will be able to have their mandatory books and supplies direct billed to the OETS Business Office.

f) Financial Aid

DCFS scholarships do not cover room, board, dormitory and other non-mandatory fees or fines levied against the youth by the university of college. Youth are required to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually, and encouraged to apply for all possible funding sources, e.g., general education scholarship, student loans, tuition waivers, veterans educational benefits, Illinois State Scholarship Commission Grants, for which the youth may be eligible. Caseworkers must contact scholarship youth in care no later than February 1st each year to confirm that they have or will submit their FAFSA. Contact Introspect Youth Services at (773) 287-2290 for assistance in completing the FAFSA or other college financial aid forms.

The FAFSA is used to determine eligibility for the following student aid programs.

- Federal Pell Grants (PELL) provides students with financial assistance to obtain an undergraduate degree. For many students, these grants provide a "foundation" of financial aid to which aid from other federal and non-federal sources may be added. Awards will depend on program funding.

- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) recipients must demonstrate exceptional financial need as determined by the federal formula. Funds are limited and PELL recipients are given priority.

- The Monetary Award Program (MAP) provides need-based grants for undergraduate students to help pay tuition and mandatory fees. The student must be a resident of Illinois.

- Federal Work Study (FWS) is awarded to undergraduates with the highest financial need after their eligibility for grants and need-based scholarships have been considered. The FWS program is a form of financial aid that allows students to earn money to pay for a portion of their educational expenses.

Note: Caseworkers must encourage youth to apply for all possible funding sources.

Section 312.100 Discharge from the Scholarship Program

a) Reasons for Discharge

Youth may be discharged from the scholarship program for the following reasons.

1) The youth completed four years in the scholarship program.

2) The youth fails to provide the OETS Business Office with written verification of his or her college/university acceptance/enrollment.

3) The youth fails to provide the OETS Business Office with a transcript of his or her grades within one month after the close of each grading period.

4) The youth fails to maintain a "C" grade point average for two grading periods. Youth will be notified of their probationary status after the first grading period when their grade point average falls below a "C." Youth will also be required to meet with an NIU Education Advisor and/or an Academic Advisor from the youth's college or university. The OETS Business Office can assist the youth in contacting these individuals.

5) The youth fails to enroll in school.

6) The youth fails to maintain an academic load of 12 credit hours each semester or quarter.

7) The youth withdraws from school.

   Note: If the Associate Deputy Director of the Office of Education and Transition Services determines that there is good cause for the youth's withdrawal from school, he or she may waive the requirement that the youth be discharged from the scholarship program.

8) The youth is dismissed from school for disciplinary reasons.

b) Decision to Discharge

The decision to recommend to the Associate Deputy Director of the Office of Education and Transition Services that a youth for which the Department has legal responsibility be discharged from the scholarship program shall be made jointly by the youth's caseworker and the OETS Business Office.

The OETS will provide written notification to the youth 30 days prior to the effective date of his or her discharge. Youth may request a review of the decision to discharge them from the DCFS Scholarship Program in accordance with **Rules 337**, **Service Appeal Process**. An appeal of the Department's decision should be filed within ten days after receiving the notification to ensure that the youth's benefits will continue during the appeal process. Caseworkers should assist youth with the appeal process.

c) Reinstatement

Youth that withdraw from school because of good cause may apply to have their scholarship reinstated provided the total monthly grant payments made through the scholarship program does not exceed 48. Requests for reinstatement must be made in writing to the OETS Business Office and contain an explanation for the youth's withdrawal from school. The decision to reinstate a youth's scholarship shall be made at the discretion of the Associate Deputy Director of the Office of Education and Transition Services.

d) Referrals to Transition Programs

When a youth for whom the Department has a legal relationship is discharged from the DCFS Scholarship Program, the youth may be referred for placement into an independent living program, foster home, group home, institution or any of the following Department life skills transition programs that are appropriate to the needs of the youth.

- Credit Counseling
- Job Readiness
- Money Management
- Vocational Career Planning
- Legal Rights and Responsibilities
- Sex Education and Family Planning
- Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counseling
- Transition Counseling

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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Policy Guide 2015.01

Department of Children and Family Services Scholarship Program
Rule and Procedure 312

DATE: January 2, 2015

TO: All DCFS and Private Agency Child Welfare Staff and Supervisors

FROM: Bobbie Gregg, Acting Director Bobbie Gregg

EFFECTIVE: Immediately

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy Guide is to communicate the recent changes to the Department's Scholarship Program, Rule and Procedure 312.

II. PRIMARY USERS

Primary users of this Policy Guide are DCFS and Private Agency Child Welfare Staff and Supervisors.

III. BACKGROUND

This Policy Guide clarifies the recent changes to the Department's Scholarship Program as the result of Public Act #098-0805.

IV. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

a) The Department will now award scholarships and fee waivers to 53 students attending any community college, university or college maintained by the State of Illinois.

b) Youth are eligible if:

1) the Department currently has court-ordered legal responsibility of the youth;

2) the youth aged out of care at age 18 or older;

3) the youth was formerly under care of the Department but has been adopted; and

4) the youth was formerly under care of the Department but has been placed in private guardianship.

c) The scholarship and fee waiver will be available for five (5) years provided the student is “continuing to work toward graduation”. The student must meet the following requirements to be considered as “continuing to work toward graduation”:

1) take a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester or quarter during fall and spring term and 6 credit hours in the summer term (or the program’s equivalency of full time status);

2) maintain a "C" grade point average and provide a copy of their semester or quarter grades to their caseworker and OETS;

3) notify their Permanency Worker and OETS, if they are under the care of the Department, if they transfer to another school, change their address, attend summer school or withdraw from school. Youth shall submit the above-required documentation directly to OETS if the Department no longer has a legal responsibility of the youth; and

4) file a FAFSA form and apply for other forms of financial aid annually, if needed, and for paying their own room and board, as well as other costs not covered by the Department Scholarship.

d) The unused scholarships and fee waivers shall be reallocated to new recipients. The process for reallocating the unused scholarships and fee waivers is:

1) upon confirmation that a scholarship recipient has withdrawn from school or no longer is “continuing to work toward graduation”, the OETS will review the spreadsheet from the Program Year to determine the next youth in line to receive a scholarship;

2) the information from the next student in line to receive a scholarship will be submitted to the National Student Clearinghouse to determine if he/she is still enrolled and attending an accredited post secondary institution. If so, the student will be notified that they are eligible to receive the remaining unused portion of the scholarship being forfeited. If no information is found on the student, attempts will be made to contact the student via the last contact information on file with OETS to determine school enrollment; and

3) OETS will continue to allocate all unused scholarships to students in order on the spreadsheet from the Program Year.

e) Before the start of the school year for which they are applying for the scholarship, the youth must have:

1) earned a high school diploma from an accredited institution;

2) earned a General Education Development certificate or diploma; or

3) met the State criteria for high school graduation.

f) The Scholarship selection committee will include at least two (2) individuals who were formerly under the care of the Department who have completed their post-secondary education.

V. QUESTIONS

Questions regarding this Policy Guide may be directed to the Office of Child and Family Policy at 217-524-1983 or via Outlook at OCFP – Mailbox. Non Outlook users may e-mail questions to cfpolicy@idcfs.state.il.us.

VI. FILING INSTRUCTIONS

File this Policy Guide immediately following Rule and Procedure 312, Scholarship Program.

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